

ARTICLE APPEARED
ON PAGE A16

THE WASHINGTON POST
5 August 1980

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

'Destabilization' in Jamaica

The Post's editorial of July 28 ["'Destabilizing' Jamaica"] is both illogical and factually incorrect.

Prime Minister Michael Manley does not need to "declare a state of emergency and suspend elections" to serve out his term. Elections in Jamaica are not due until early in 1982, but the prime minister announced his intention to exercise his constitutional right to hold earlier elections. He will announce the date as soon as he is advised by the independent electoral commission that the new electoral process negotiated with the opposition is in place. The decision is undoubtedly his to name the date anytime between now and 1982. He has decided upon fall 1980 elections.

The state of emergency approved by the Jamaican Parliament in 1976, which was lifted in 1977, was very effective in dealing with the destabilization that was then taking place. It is widely believed that the unfounded references

to a state of emergency and to military solutions fed to sections of the overseas media by certain forces in Jamaica are part of a campaign whose purpose is to undermine the capacity of the government to deal effectively with the destabilization that knowledgeable observers agree is now taking place.

The government of Jamaica has been assured by the security forces that they are quite capable of dealing with the matter under existing laws.

Speaking at a press conference in New York recently, Prime Minister Manley made it clear that he did not accuse the U.S. government of undertaking this latest round of destabilization. He said that he had accepted assurances given by the Carter administration that the U.S. government was not involved and that he had no evidence to suggest otherwise.

Since Louis Wolf [editor of the Washington-based "Covert Action Information Bulletin"] identified 15 Americans

in Jamaica as CIA agents participating in a destabilization campaign, Prime Minister Manley has made no statement that alters the government's position.

The Post's statement that Mr. Manley "actively supported Mr. Wolf's action" is false. I totally reject the implied suggestion that the government should gag or in any way interfere with any branch of the media. I also reject the suggestion that the government should suppress the right of our youth to peacefully disseminate information or express their views, however much we may dislike or disagree with such views.

Given a similar situation in your country, would The Post have dared to suggest to the president that he influences the press to suppress news or commentary or that he influences, disciplines or gags the youth arm of his political party to the point where they are prevented from expressing a point of view in a peaceful and lawful manner? I dare say you would not. The Post's suggestions are an affront to Jamaica and all other Third World democracies, to our people and to our way of life.

Jamaica is not a dictatorship. It is not a fascist state. It is among the strongest democracies in this hemisphere. The intention of the government of Jamaica is to strengthen, not weaken, our democratic traditions and it will pay the price of articles such as The Post's rather than be diverted from that path.

ALFRED A. RATTRAY

Ambassador of Jamaica to the United States
Washington